



## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Safe Schools Alliance Partners Kickoff Youth Suicide Hope & Help Education Series**

*Media Invited to Press Conference on May 22 in Bend*

Transitioning into adulthood can bring big changes and intense challenges. In Oregon, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 15-24, surpassed only by accidents. Tragically, between January 1 through May 15 of this year, the Deschutes County Medical Examiner reports that two local youth ended their lives by suicide.

"Teen suicide is a serious problem, but there is hope," said Dr. Susan Keys, National Youth Suicide expert and Bend resident. "Teen suicide is preventable, there are signs to watch for and resources for help."

Dr. Keys is one of more than a dozen local leaders coming together to kick off the Hope & Help Education Series on Monday, May 22 at 10 a.m. at Bend's Municipal Court at 555 NE 15th Street (Corner of Hwy 20 and 15th) in Bend to raise awareness about youth suicide and help our community better prevent its occurrence.

Dr. Keys will be joined at a press conference by Bend Police Chief Jim Porter, Youth Mental Health Specialist Cheryl Emerson, Deschutes County Suicide Prevention Coordinator David Visiko and Medical Director, Dr. Wil Berry, Bend-La Pine Schools Superintendent Shay Mikalson, Sisters School District Superintendent Curtiss Scholl, Redmond School District Executive Director Martha Hinman, St. Charles Heath Services Director of Inpatient Behavioral Health Services Molly Darling, Crook County Schools Principal Kurt Sloper, High Desert Education Service District Superintendent John Rexford, members of the Sunriver, Redmond and Crook County law enforcement agencies and Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

"Teen suicide is a growing health concern," said Rexford. "With summer vacation just weeks away, Safe Schools Alliance partners want to ensure that parents and students

have the resources they need to proactively engage their friends and loved ones in meaningful ways that both help and provide hope to those at risk."

During the press conference, local leaders will announce several upcoming opportunities for family members and their middle and high school youth to attend Safe Schools Alliance's Hope & Help sponsored education events: The Reasons You Need to Know About Youth Suicide. These events will provide attendees with information about suicide prevention, how to find help in the community, particularly when students are away from school in the summer, and how to navigate current entertainment in a way that facilitates parent-child communication.

"As a parent, it is difficult at times to recognize the difference between the typical problems teens have while growing up verses the more serious ones," said Visiko. "These Hope & Help events will empower parents and youth to talk about suicide, depression in productive, meaningful ways and how to find resources."

During the Hope & Help events, panelists will give students the tools they need to navigate the things they see on social media and on television.

"It's pervasive. Youth may identify with characters they see in comics, on Netflix, or in other media," said Visiko. "It's important for them to know that there are healthy ways to cope. If they have watched something and need support, we want to encourage them to reach out and talk with a trusted adult."

Law enforcement, education professionals, behavioral health professionals, family survivors and advocacy members of our communities are aware of the suicide trends among our youth and share a deep concern about this trend.

"We as law enforcement realize we are the guardians of our communities," said Chief Porter. "As we move forward in the coming weeks and months, we will take great responsibility in making our communities safe and finding solutions to the problems that threaten the safety of our community."

If you or someone you know needs help immediately, you should take one of the following actions:

- \* Call 9-1-1
- \* Call the Lifeline at 1-800-273 TALK (8255)
- \* Text '273TALK' to 839-863
- \* Crisis line 541-322-7500, ext 9
- \* Contact your school counseling center or other mental health professional
- \* Crisis walk-in, 2577 NE Courtney, Bend, Monday - Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.